

Update

Fall 2011

Parent-Teen Mediation

A Way for Parents and Teens to Communicate

By Cathy Goldman and Gwen Jones

After a hard day at work, you come home to find your teen lying on his or her bed playing loud music and texting on his or her phone. You walk into the kitchen and see dirty dishes stacked up on the counter. You thought you gave clear instructions to your teen about cleaning up his or her dishes before you come home from work.

What's your next step?

Do you yell, "Get in here now and clean up your mess. I'm sick and tired of you leaving your dishes on the counter," or do you simply clean it up yourself, resenting every move you make? Communicating with your teen can be difficult and frustrating. When the message is delivered in a way that attacks, threatens and creates defensive behavior, most teens react in a negative way.

Parent-teen mediation is a form of family mediation that focuses on improving communication patterns and resolving disputes between parents and teens in a respectful and more sensitive manner. The mediation team consists of one adult mediator and one teen mediator. Mediators, acting as neutral facilitators, assist family members in identifying their needs and moving toward some common agreement focusing on future behavior. In addition, mediators help family members communicate their concerns in a way that can be received more positively. Improved communication leads to a positive change in the dynamics of the interaction of family members.

Mediation achieves these goals by providing a forum for family members to open the lines of communication, share perspectives, and work together to solve the issues at hand. Family members work toward a con-



crete agreement that each member feels is fair and realistic. Mediated agreements have a higher likelihood of follow through since the input comes from each family member.

For example, in the case of the messy kitchen, the parent can express his or her need for a clean kitchen in order to

get dinner prepared in a timely fashion. The teen can express his or her need to relax after school before doing chores. Once each perspective is identified, family members can brainstorm options and agree on solutions which will meet the needs of each family member.

One of the biggest benefits of parent-teen mediation is the opportunity to teach teens problem solving skills. In order to problem solve, parents must be willing to negotiate on certain issues. Sometimes parents avoid negotiating rules because they believe that negotiating with teens means giving in or showing weakness. When parents negotiate rules that are appropriate for teens to help decide, they teach their teen to think clearly. Negotiating appropriate issues not only teaches teens how to think, but it also encourages them to be responsible, and sets the expectation that they will use their energies and power in positive ways.

Typical negotiable issues in a mediation session involve school performance, chores, computer and cell phone use, curfews, friendships, dating, and weekend and weekday activities. Family members work with mediators toward a concrete agreement that each family member feels is fair and realistic. The mediation

process assists family members to resolve their conflicts in constructive ways and teaches parents and teens new ways to handle the strong emotions that surround most family conflict. In addition to rules which are negotiable, parents have rules which are nonnegotiable. These rules can pertain to issues related to health, safety, ethics and values. As children grow, parents need to decide when to change nonnegotiable rules to negotiable rules.

Parent-teen mediation enhances family relationships by encouraging open and honest communication of feelings and needs, and recognition of the rights of both parents and teens. When threats and personal attacks are replaced with communication that addresses and solves the problem, family members gain cooperation and work toward agreements that increase the family bond.

In addition to mediation services, the Parent-Teen Mediation Program is involved in other activities. Volunteers facilitate group discussions at School Engagement Workshops (a program that helps to reduce truancy in the Bellevue School District). In addition, a Parent-Teen Communication Workshop is offered upon request to groups and organizations in the Bellevue Community.

In October and November 2011, the Parent-Teen Mediation Program will partner with the Bellevue Youth Theater to perform a short skits using improv or "start-stop action" techniques to illustrate effective communication skills for parents and teens, based on the Parent-Teen Communication Workshops.

For more information call 425-452-4091 or visit: http://www.bellevuewa.gov/parents_and_teens.htm

Comments from former Teen Mediators

The training I received helped me resolve some problems between me and my sister. I structured a problem solving session between us, using some of the guidelines used in mediation sessions. In general I find myself listening better and think what I've learned has made me more conscious of my own behavior in interactions with others.

— Julia Terlinchamp (Julia has gone on to a life in politics and academia.)

Mediation is truly a beautiful program whose values and procedures carry over into other fields of work as well. Through this program, I feel like I've become more open-minded and effective at conflict resolution as well. —Benjamin Trnka

BNMP In-Service Training on Writing Agreements

**with Kevin Coonrod,
attorney, ombudsman and mediator**



***A MUST FOR ALL BELLEVUE
MEDIATORS BOTH SEASONED
AND NEW!***

***WHAT? In-Service Training on
Writing Agreements***

***WHEN? Wed. September 21st from
6:30 PM to 8:30 PM at Bellevue City
Hall in room 1E-112***

***WHY? Have you ever left a mediation feeling that the
mediation went well but the write-up of the
agreement was weak?***

***Have you ever felt that the agreement might have
lasted longer or had better follow through if the
agreement had been more specific?***

***Writing agreements is challenging. Come and hear
the presentation by Kevin Coonrod, attorney,
ombudsman and mediator.***

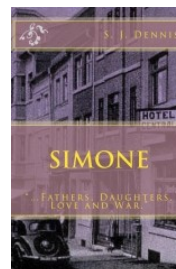
***This in-service will teach the required elements in a
binding contract, give writing tips, discuss the "Who,
What, Where, How & When?" questions to ask the
parties when drafting durable agreements, and will
include a section on how to properly designate a
representative of an organization as the signatory of
a contract.***

***All Neighborhood and Parent-Teen Mediation
Program Volunteers are invited to attend.***

***RSVP to mediation_info@bellevuewa.gov to reserve
your spot.***

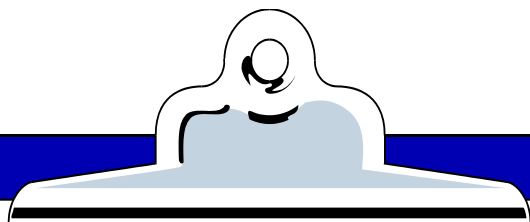
Snacks will be provided.

Steve Dennis Introduces "Simone"



Steve Dennis, a 14 year veteran of the BNMP, has released his first novel, "Simone." The story of a Seattle area war veteran, the book takes the reader to many familiar local scenes. To learn more about the novel you can visit his website www.sidennis.com.

A Kindle version is also available. Congratulations Steve!



Parent—Teen Update

By Gwen Jones

In addition to mediation opportunities, we will have lots of activities for volunteers this Fall. Once again, we have been invited to help with the School Engagement Workshops which are designed to help reduce truancy in the Bellevue School District. These workshops are a good place to practice mediation skills, and to help Bellevue families. If you didn't get a chance to help out last year, there will be more opportunities this year.



We also have opportunities for volunteers to help with Parent-Teen Communication Workshops. We have been asked to present these workshops to various organizations in the Bellevue community. A few volunteers have been trained to help, and more of you will have opportunities in the future.

Our newest activity is a partnership with the Bellevue Youth Theater to perform short skits using improv or "start-stop action" techniques to illustrate effective communication skills for parents and teens, based on the Parent-Teen Communication Workshops. Our volunteers will be involved in the planning stages of this project.

Lastly, we have two in-services scheduled in September. The first is a "Mediation Refresher Course" on Wed. Sept 14th at 6:00 pm in room 1E-118, and the second is on "Writing Agreements" on Wed. Sept. 21st at 6:30 pm in room 1E-112. Hope to see you there!

BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators

Parent-Teen In-Service Training:

Refresher Course and Review

with Gwen Jones

Wed., Sept. 14th, from 6-8 PM in Room 1E-118

Joint Neighborhood and Parent-Teen In-Service Training:

Writing Agreements

with Kevin Coonrod

Wed., Sept. 21st, from 6:30-8:30 PM in Room 1E-112

VOLUNTEER NEWS

New Conciliators:

Karen Yellman

Mark Combs

Mia Barbera

Foreclosure Mediation is up and running

Congratulations to our volunteers who completed the 3 day foreclosure training with the Dept. of Commerce:

Darcy Hollie, Cheryl Cohen, Michelle Mentzer, Steve Dennis, Sharon Moon, Donna Morse, and Bill Baron. We are starting to get cases and we look forward to a successful program.

Program Staff:

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

Volunteer Profile:

Darcy Hollie



Darcy has been volunteering with the City of Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program since January of 2011 and appreciates being able to help those in the Bellevue area. She has long had a passion for working in her community where she also volunteers as a certified mediator for the DRC of Snohomish, Island and Skagit County. She holds Board positions with Seattle Children's Hospital and Rwanda Girls Initiative and is a founding member of the We Believe Guild for Seattle Children's Hospital. She is also a member of Washington Women's Foundation, Assistance League of the Eastside and The World Affairs Council. She has held marketing and sales positions with Microsoft Corporation, Hewlett-Packard Corporation and British Telecom Plc. Darcy holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Oregon and resides in Medina with her husband and two children. She loves spending time with her family, travel, reading and running.

**BELLEVUE
NEIGHBORHOOD MEDIATION PROGRAM**

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